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"HOMO SUM."

Being a Letter to an
Anti-Suffragist from an
Anthropologist.

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“HOMO SUM.”

Being a letter to an Anti-Suffragist from an Anthropologist.

DEAR ANTI-SUFFRAGIST,

Will it induce you to read this letter if I tell you at the outset that the possession of a vote would grievously embarrass me? Personally, I have no more interest in or aptitude for politics than I have for plumbing. But, embarrassing though I should find the possession of a vote, I strongly feel that it is a gift which ought to be given, a gift which I must nerve myself to receive. May I also add that, had your Society been founded some ten or twenty years ago, I might very possibly have joined it. I cannot do so now, because my point of view has changed. How this change came about, I should like to explain a little later. For the present, will you, by way of apology for this letter, accept the fact that there is between us the deep-down sympathy of a conviction once shared?

And further, by way of preface, may I say that I do not want to argue, probably because I find that in my own case disputation rarely, if ever, is an efficient instrument in my search after truth. What always interests and often helps me is to be told of any conviction seriously and strongly felt by another mind, especially if I can at the same time learn in

detail the avenues by which that conviction has been approached. This is why I venture on the egotism of recounting my own experiences.

In my own case, the avenues of approach to what I believe to be truth have been circuitous and through regions apparently remote and subjects irrelevant. I have been investigating lately the origins of religion among primitive peoples, and this has led me to observe the customs of South Sea Islanders and North American Indians. In order to understand these customs, I have been further driven to acquire the elements of psychology and sociology. Without intentionally thinking about the suffrage question at all, while my thoughts have been consciously engaged with these multifarious topics, dimly at first, and strongly of late, the conviction has grown up in my mind that I ought to be a Suffragist. I can with perfect candour say that for weeks and even months I have tried to shirk the formulation of my own views and the expression of them to you, partly because I feared their expression might cause either boredom or irritation, still more because I wanted to do other things. But the subject, fermenting in my mind, has left me no peace, and irresistibly I have felt compelled to embark on this letter.

-womanly-

Your position is, I think, what mine once was : that a woman is better without a vote. The possession and use of a vote—of political power—is somehow “unwomanly.” With this position in one sense I still heartily agree, but I must add a hasty and perhaps unexpected corollary. Possession and use of a vote by a man is unmanly. This sounds absurd, because by “man” our language compels us to mean not only a male thing but a human being; and of the word “woman” we cannot at present make the correlative statement. In this undoubted linguistic fact lies hidden a long, sad story, the secret indeed of the whole controversy. For the

present, may I summarize my position thus ? I share with you the feeling that a vote is unwomanly. I add to it the feeling that it is unmanly. What I mean is that, to my mind, a vote has nothing whatever to do with either sex *qua* sex ; it has everything to do with the humanity shared in common by two sexes.

May I illustrate this statement ? We are apt to speak of certain virtues as "womanly," certain others as "manly." It is "womanly" to be meek, patient, tactful, modest. It is manly to be strong, brave, honourable. We make here, I think, an initial mistake, or, at least, over-statement, apt to damage the morality of both man and woman. To be meek, patient, tactful, modest, honourable, brave, is not to be either manly or womanly ; it is to be humane, to have social virtue. To be womanly is one thing and one only ; it is to be sensitive to man, to be highly endowed with the sex instinct ; to be manly is to be sensitive to woman. About this sex-endowment other and more complex sentiments may tend to group themselves ; but in the final resort, womanliness and manliness can have no other than this simple significance. When we exhort a woman to be "womanly," we urge her to emphasize her relation to the other sex, to enhance her sensitiveness, already, perhaps, over keen, to focus her attention on an element in life which nature has already made quite adequately prominent. We intend to urge her to be refined, we are in peril of inviting her to be coarse.

The moral and social danger of dividing the "humane" virtues into two groups, manly and womanly, is evident. Until quite recent years a boy was often brought up to feel that so long as he was strong, brave, and honourable, he might leave gentleness, patience, modesty to his sister. To her, so long as she was gentle, tactful, modest, much latitude was allowed in the matter of physical cowardice and petty moral shifts. Both were the losers by this arti-

ficial division of moral industry. The whole convention rested on a rather complex confusion of thought, which cannot here be completely unravelled. The virtues supposed to be womanly are in the main the virtues generated by subordinate social position. Such are gentleness and the inevitable "tact." They are the weapons of the weaker, physically or socially, of the man or the woman who dare not either strike out or speak out; they are virtues practised by the conquered, by the slave in rude societies, in politer states by the governess and the companion, but also by the private secretary and the tutor; they are virtues not specially characteristic of the average duchess. In a word they are the outcome not of sex but of status.

The attempt, then, to confine man or woman within the limits of sex, to judge of right or wrong for them by a sex standard, is, I think, dangerous and disastrous to the individual, dangerous and disastrous to the society of which he or she is a unit. This is felt and acknowledged about man. We do not incessantly say to a man, "Be male, your manhood is in danger." Such counsel, we instinctively feel, would be, if not superfluous and impertinent, at least precarious. A man sanely and rightly refuses to have his activities secluded into the accident of sex. We have learnt the lesson—and to this language bears unconscious witness—that "man" connotes and comprises "humanity." Dare we say as much of "woman"? The whole Woman's Movement is, to my mind, just the learning of that lesson. It is not an attempt to arrogate man's prerogative of manhood; it is not even an attempt to assert and emphasize woman's privilege of womanhood; it is simply the demand that in the life of woman, as in the life of man, space and liberty shall be found for a thing bigger than either manhood or womanhood—for humanity. On the banners of every suffrage society, one motto, and one only, should be blazoned:—

Homo sum, humani nihil (ne suffragium quidem)
a me alienum puto.*

In the early phases of the woman's movement this point was, I think, to none of us quite clear. The beginnings of a movement are always dark and half unconscious, characterized rather by a blind unrest and sense of discomfort than by a clear vision of the means of relief. Woman had been told *ad nauseam* that she must be womanly, she was not unreasonably sick to death of it, stifled by unmitigated womanliness. By a not unnatural reaction, she sought relief in what seemed the easiest exit—in trying to be manly. She sought salvation in hard collars and billy-cock hats. Considering the extravagance and inconvenience of the feminine dress of the day, small blame to her if she did. I am ashamed to remember now that a certain superficial ugliness in the first beginnings of the movement blinded me for a time to its essential soundness. It was at this date that, had your Anti-Suffrage Society existed, I might have joined it.

The danger, never serious, of any tendency to "ape the man" is over and past. The most militant of Suffragists† never now aims at being masculine. Rather, by a swing of the pendulum we are back in an inverse form of the old initial error, the over-emphasis of sex. Woman, not man, now insists over-loudly on her own womanhood, and in this hubbub of man and woman the still small voice of humanity is apt to be unheard. This new emphasis of sex seems

* To anyone who has patience to read this letter to the end it will, I hope, be sufficiently clear that I wish to emphasize rather the importance of the general movement for woman's emancipation than the particular question of the vote. The words of Terence chosen for my motto mark my attitude: "I am a human being, nothing that is human do I account alien." But that there may be no ambiguity I have allowed myself the addition of a parenthesis "not even a vote"—*ne suffragium quidem*.

† I cannot bring myself to use the ugly diminutive now current.

to me as ugly and certainly coarser than the old error. Still, we are bound to remember that perfect sanity can never fairly be demanded from those in bondage or in pain.

The woman question seems, then, somehow to hinge on the balance between sex and humanity. Between the two there seems some sort of rivalry, some antinomy.

But is this possible? Is there really any conflict, any dissonance? And if so, how may we hope for its resolution?

The real issue of a problem is always best seen when its factors are so far as possible simplified. We may therefore be pardoned if for a moment we go back to consider conditions of life less complex than our own. It was indeed in studying the psychology* of primitive man, in noting how primitive man faced the problems of sex and humanity, that what may be in part a solution of the difficulty occurred to me.

That frail, complex, pathetic thing we call our humanity is built up, it would seem, out of some few primitive instincts which we share with other animals and with some plants. Sex† is one of these instincts, nutrition another, self-preservation a third. These three instincts all work together for the conservation of life in the individual. Each in itself gives satisfaction, and—a noticeable point—they

* I should like here to acknowledge my debt to Mr. W. McDougall's *Introduction to Social Psychology*, a book which should be in the hands of every student of social phenomena. My psychology is almost wholly based on the work of Mr. McDougall and Dr. William James. It is, perhaps, unnecessary to add that for my views on the woman's question neither of these writers is in any way responsible.

† For brevity's sake I use the word *sex* for equivalent to what psychologists term the "instinct of reproduction"; the equivalence is valid for all but the lowest forms of animal life.

do not normally clash. Each makes way for the other, no two acting simultaneously. Hunger appeased makes way for love, and love for hunger. Instincts on the whole tend to be *recurrent* rather than *concurrent*. If we had only these simple instincts to reckon with, if our humanity was based only on sex, self-preservation, nutrition, there would be, it seems, no "war in our members."

But to these simple impulses, these life-functions as it were, man has added another,—the gregarious, or, as sociologists pleasantly term it, the "herd" instinct.* Why men and some other animals herd together—whether for warmth, for food, for mutual protection, or from some obscurer sympathetic impulse—is not very clearly known. But once the "herd" impulse is established, the "simple life" is, it would seem, at an end. Up to this point though individuality was but little developed, the life impulses of the unit were paramount; but, henceforth, the life impulses of each unit are controlled by a power from without as well as by instincts from within—controlled by the life impulses of other units, a power that acts contemporaneously with the inner instincts, and that is bound to control them, to inhibit for its own ends the individualistic impulses of hunger, of reproduction, even of self-preservation. With the "herd" instinct arises the conflict between *our* life-impulses and the life-impulses of others. Out of that conflict is developed our whole religion and morality, our sociology, our politics.

Between "herd" instinct and the individual impulses, all, happily, is not conflict. The "herd" helps the individual to hunt and to get food, above all helps the weaker individual to survive. But, on the whole, what we notice most is *inhibition*. The history of civilization is the history of a long conflict between herd-socialism and individualistic im-

* See Mr. Trotter's very suggestive papers on "Herd Instinct" in the *Sociological Review*, 1908.

pulse. What concerns us here is the effect of "herd" instinct on one, and only one, of these impulses, the sex instinct. Herd instinct tends to inhibit *all* individualistic impulse, but the conflict is, in the case of the impulse of sex, most marked, and, it would seem, most ineluctable. The herd aggregates, sex, more than any other instinct, segregates; the herd is social, sex anti-social. Some animals—*e.g.*, birds—are gregarious until breeding time, and then they separate. Had humanity had no sex, it would probably have been civilized ages ago, only there might have been no humanity to civilize.

At this point you will, I am sure, exclaim—I am almost tempted to exclaim myself—"This is impossible, outrageous." What about the primal sanctities of marriage? What about "the voice that breathed o'er Eden"? Are not man and wife the primitive unit of civilization? From the primitive pair, you will urge, arises the family, from the family the tribe, from the tribe the state, from the state the nation, from the nation the federation, from the federation the brotherhood of all humanity. Alas, alas! To the roots of that fair Family Tree, whose leaves were for the healing of the nations, anthropology, sociology, and psychology have combined to lay the axe. Alas for Eden! Adam and Eve may have learnt there, though they appear to have forgotten, their Duty towards God, but of their Duty towards their Neighbour they necessarily knew less than a pack of hunting wolves. Society, in so far as it deals with sex, starts with the herd. Society is founded, not on the union of the sexes, but on what is a widely different thing, its *prohibition*, its limitation. The "herd" says to primitive man not "thou shalt marry," but, save under the strictest limitations for the common good, "thou shalt *not* marry."*

Here, again, a glance at primitive conditions may

* I use "marriage" throughout this paper to mean simply the union of man and woman irrespective of any forms or ceremonies that may attend it.

serve to illustrate my point. Without entering on any vexed questions of origins, it is now accepted on all hands that in the social state known as *Exogamy* we find one of the earliest instances of marriage, or, rather, anti-marriage law, of inhibition of the sex-impulse by the herd. Savages over a large portion of the globe are still found who form themselves into groups with *totems*, sacred animals or plants whose name they bear. Within these *totem* groups they agree *not* to marry—the Buffalo man may *not* marry a Buffalo girl; he *may* marry an Antelope girl. All Antelope women are his potential wives. All Buffalo girls are “*tabu*,” are his “sisters,” or his “mothers.” Sex, if it is not, as some sociologists think, the origin of the pugnacious instinct in man, is at least often closely neighboured by it. By the institution of exogamy, by the *tabu* on the women of a man’s own group, peace is in this respect secured—secured, be it noted, not through sex union, but by its limitation, its prohibition.

All this, you will say, is curious and interesting; but really too primitive to be of any avail. We have shed these savage instincts. Pugnacity about sex is really out of date, as irrelevant to humanity as the horns that the buffalo exhibits in fighting for his mate. I am not so sure that pugnacity in relation to sex is really obsolete, since sex is still shadowed by its dark familiar, jealousy. But let that pass. The instinct of sex is anti-social, exclusive, not only owing to its pugnacity; it is, we have now to note, anti-social, exclusive, owing also to the intensity of its egotism.

Once more I would not be misunderstood. Egotism, the self-regarding sentiment, is, like pugnacity, an element that has worked and does work for civilization. The self-regarding sentiment is indeed the very heart and kernel of our volition, and hence of our highest moral efforts. Moreover, all passion, all strong emotion, intellectual passion excepted, is in a sense exclusive and egotistic; but

of all passions sex-emotion is nowadays perhaps the most exclusive, the most egotistic.

The reason of this is so far obscure that it must be considered a little in detail. As civilization advances, the primal instincts, though they remain the bases of character and the motive power of action, are in their cruder form habitually satisfied, and therefore not immediately and obviously operative. Among the well-to-do classes, it is rare to find anyone who has felt the stimulus of acute hunger, and unless he go out into the wilds to seek it, thanks to generations of good government and efficient police, a man may pass his whole life without experiencing the emotion of fear. But for the prompt and efficient satisfaction of the sex-impulse, society has made and can make no adequate provision. And this for a reason that demands special attention.

It is very important that we should keep hold of the initial fact that at the back of sex lies a blind instinct for the continuance of the race, an instinct shared with plants and animals. This instinct is so bound up with our life, with our keenest and most complex emotions, that we are inclined to forget that there is an instinct at all, apt to forget not how *low* down but how *deep* down it lies. This instinct, it has been well observed, tends "in mankind to lend the immense energy of its impulse to sentiments and complex impulses into which it enters, while its specific character remains submerged and unconscious."* This is not the case with hunger, nor yet, save to some slight degree, with fear. But, if it is important we should not lose sight of the basal instinct, it is still more important that we clearly recognize the complexity of the emotional system into which that basal instinct enters, because therein lies the complexity of the problem of relating the individual to the herd. So long as the need is simple and instinctive, its inherent egotism is not seriously anti-

* See W. McDougall, *Social Psychology*, p. 82.

social ; but when the simple instinct of sex develops into the complex sentiment of love, the impulse and its attendant egotism is, if less violent, far more extensive and all-pervading, far more difficult to content and to balance. When any wife will suffice for any husband, egotisms do not seriously clash ; when two men are in love with one woman, we have tragic material.

This egotism, this exclusiveness in sex-emotion, is most easily observed in its acuter phases, and in these analytic days is noted by patient as well as spectator. Take the letters of the newly-engaged. Old style (frankly self-centred and self-projective) : "We feel that all the world is the richer for our new-found joy." New style (introspective, altruistic) : "We shall try not to be more selfish than we can help." The practical result is probably much the same ; in the intensity of the new reinforcement of two lives united, all the outside world, once so interesting, becomes for a time a negligible fringe ; but the advance in the new intellectual outlook is marked. Personality we now recognize is not a thing that you can tie up in separate parcels, labelling each parcel with the name of the person to whom it is addressed. Any new strong emotion dyes and alters the whole personality, so that it never is and never can be the same to anyone again. Analogy is usually misleading, but the closest and most instructive analogy to what happens is that of focus. You cannot have a strong emotional focus on two things at the same time. Of this natural and inevitable sex-egotism society is, of course, wisely tolerant. This man and woman will ultimately do society a supreme service, and for a time she accepts as inevitable that they should be, in common parlance, "no good." Society *en masse* has a good deal of common-sense, but in the more intimate clash of individual relations sentiment is apt to obscure clear

vision, and the necessarily egotistic and exclusive character of a sex-emotion* is sometimes overlooked. This oversight may be the source of much misunderstanding and even of obscure suffering.

Sex, then, like other strong instincts, is anti-social and individualistic. In its primal form it induces, perhaps more than any other instinct, pugnacity; in its later and more diffused form, as the emotion of love, it is exclusive through its intensity of focus.

Now, this intensity of focus, this egotism, is often confused with altruism, and is labelled "Devotion to another." Society, it will be urged, may suffer from the exclusiveness of sex, but is it not ennobled by the spectacle of utter self-devotion, the devotion of the lover to his mistress, of the wife to her husband. A Frenchman long ago defined love—with a truth that is not at all necessarily cynical—as *Le grand egoïsme à deux*. No one who has gone through the experience of "falling in love" will deny that the definition is illuminating. One secret of the intense joy of loving and being loved is the immense reinforcement of one's own personality. Suddenly, to another you become what you have always been to yourself, the centre of the universe. You are more vividly conscious, more sure of yourself. Many motives move a man and a woman to marriage, but of these not the meanest is a healthy and hungry egotism.

But surely, it will be urged, self-devotion cannot be akin to egotism. The self is "lost in another." "Hence the purifying, elevating nature of the flame of love, which burns up all the dross of selfishness," etc., etc. But does it? Can any honest man or woman say that he or she, with single-hearted devo-

* I apologize to all psychologists, and especially to Mr. McDougall, for a somewhat loose use (unavoidable in a popular discussion) of the terms instinct, emotion, sentiment.

tion, desires solely the good of the beloved one? A man desires his wife's happiness. That happiness comes to her through another, not through him. Is he utterly content? What he really desires is not solely her happiness but that her happiness should be in him.

Surely, though, there is such a thing as utter devotion, that asks no return. The spirit of "though he slay me yet will I trust him," a spirit of self-abasement rather than self-enhancement. There is, and it is what modern psychology calls "negative self-feeling."* Its recognition throws a flood of light on the supposed ennobling devotion of sex, and especially, perhaps, of sex in woman.

Egotism or self-feeling takes, we are now taught, two forms, positive and negative; the instinct for self-assertion, the instinct, sometimes equally strong, for self-abasement. With the first form we are all familiar. The second form, which is quite as real, and perhaps more poignant, has been, till lately, somewhat neglected. This instinct of self-abasement, of negative self-feeling, appears in animals. A young dog will crawl on his belly, with his head sunk and his tail drooping, to approach a larger, older dog. The instinct is not fear; it does not accompany flight. The dog approaches, he even wants to attract attention, but it is by deprecation. It is the very ecstasy of humility.

This negative self-regarding sentiment, this instinct of subjection, enters into all intensely passionate relations. It is an ingredient alike of love and of religion, and accounts for many of the analogies between these two complex sentiments. There can, however, be little question that, though it is rarely, in moments of vehement emotion, wholly absent in either sex, it is more highly developed and more uniformly

* Mr. McDougall (*Social Psychology*, p. 62) says that "negative and positive self-feelings" were "first adequately recognised" by M. Ribot (*Psychology of the Emotions*, p. 240).

present in women. In the bed-rock of human—or, rather, animal—nature lies the sex-subjection of woman, not, be it clearly understood, because man is physically stronger, but because he is man and his form of sex self-feeling is dominant and positive; woman's is more usually submissive and negative.

A superficial thinker may imagine that here I give my case away. "Ah! now at last we have the truth. Man is born to command, woman to obey. Woman is by nature unfitted to rule, and hence to vote. Back to the hearth and home." Not at all. Woman *qua* woman, *qua* sex, is in subjection. What purpose that serves in the divine economy I do not know, but it seems to me a bed-rock fact, one that I have neither the power nor the wish to alter, one also, I think, that has not been clearly enough recognized. But woman *qua* human being, and even *qua* weaker human being, is not in subjection. The argument from superior force is as obsolete as war-paint and woad. When a man first says to a woman, "I must insist that you . . ." he had better take care. He is in danger of toppling over from admiration or friendship into love. The woman, if she is attracted, yields, with a strange thrill. This is not because he is the stronger. The same evening her brother also "insists" that she shall not borrow his latch key. He is also stronger, but there is no corresponding thrill.

My point is, I hope, clear. If woman were woman only, "the sex," as she is sometimes called, she would wish, she would ask, for no vote, no share in dominion. A claim based on sex is, to my mind, doomed to failure, and this not because man is physically or even mentally stronger, but because *qua* man he is dominant, he has more *positive* self-feeling. The consciousness of this haunts, I believe obscurely, the inward mind of many, both men and women, who object to "women's rights"; they shrink from formulating this consciousness, and confuse it with the argument from superior strength. It is

better, I think, that, if true, it be plainly faced and stated. To my mind, one of the most difficult problems that men and women have to work out together is how to reconcile this subjection of sex with that equality and comradeship which is the true and only basis of even married friendship.

Our analysis of egotism into positive and negative has important bearings on the subject of "devotion" and its supposed "hallowing" influences. Sex-devotion is not altruism. This truth women, perhaps, more than men, need to lay to heart. I do not think women can fairly be blamed for their confusion of thought in this matter, because the sanctity of devotion has been so constantly impressed upon them. Their charity is always to begin, and often end, at home. What purpose in evolution this tendency to self-devotion in women serves, remains, as before said, obscure. It is the cause of intense rapture to women, and, so far, is a good. It occurs in strong natures as much, and perhaps more, than in weak. When unduly fostered, and when not balanced by sympathy and comradeship, and by a wide intellectual and social outlook, it acts in married life as an obscure canker, peculiarly irritating and poisonous, because masquerading as a virtue. The egotism of self-assertion atrophies life by over-focus, but the egotism of self-abasement adds to this morbid over-focus a slackening and enfeebling of the whole personality, which defeats its own end and repels where it would attract. The important thing is to clear the air and see plainly that this sex-devotion, this egotism of self-abasement, is *not* altruism. It causes none of the healthy reactions of altruism, none of that bracing and expanding and uplifting of the spirit that mysteriously comes of "giving ourselves to something other and greater than ourselves."

But, it may again be urged, granted that sex leads to egotism, yet because it is intimately bound up with the parental instinct, it does *also* lead to

altruism. Bound up with, associated—yes, but of its essence, no. People do not marry that they may indulge the altruism of bringing up their children. Races exist who are not even aware that marriage has any connection with the birth of children, and to whom therefore the prospect can lend no altruistic impulse. Parental, or, rather, maternal instinct is one, and perhaps the greatest source of ‘tender’ altruistic emotion, of that disinterested love for and desire to protect the helpless which is the least egotistical and perhaps the loveliest of human sentiments. But the maternal instinct in the main is a thing healthy indeed and happy, but nowise specially holy. It is an extended egotism. Our *ego*, we are nowadays taught, is not limited by our own personality. It extends to wife and husband, to children and relations, to our clothes and possessions, to our clubs and associations. The extended *ego*, like the personal *ego*, is apt to be at war with herd-altruism. Love of my own children does not necessarily lead to love of yours. A woman will often shamelessly indulge about her children an egotism that she would blush to exhibit for herself. Strange though it may seem, the most altruistic members of society, the best citizens, are not invariably those with the largest families. Here, again, we are bound to remember that a large tolerance should be extended by society to the egotism of parents. It is from parents that society draws the raw material of which society is made.

Before leaving the question of sex-egotism and sex-exclusiveness, may I guard against any possible exaggeration or misunderstanding? The instinct of sex, by its association with pugnacity, and by the intensity of its mutual egotism, is, we are obliged to admit, to an extent beyond that of the other instincts, exclusive and anti-social. Under the influence of sex and the intensified self-assertion it brings with it, a man will demand that society should be a sympathetic

spectator ; here comes in his *positive* self-feeling ; he will be sensitive and alert to resent any shadow of criticism as to his choice, but share his emotion he cannot. Most highly civilized human beings have moments when, if they look facts in the face, they feel that under the influence of passion they fall, somehow, a little below themselves, just because of this intense egotism, this inexorable inability to share. The social conscience is sensitive nowadays. Our very religion has come to be not a matter of personal salvation, but rather the sense of sharing a life greater than our own and somehow common to us all.

And yet, all said and done, a man or woman is generally (not always) the better and the bigger for passing through the experience of *le grand egoisme à deux*. Because of the frailty of our mortal nature he can have this experience only towards one human being at a time, and that one must be of the opposite sex. But through that one,

“ Earth’s crammed full of Heaven
And every common bush ablaze with God.”

To almost every mortal it is granted once in his life to go up into the Mount of Transfiguration. He comes down with his face shining, and of the things he saw on the Mount he may not speak. But through that revelation he is suddenly humbled before all the rest of the world whom he cannot thus utterly love.

To resume : Sex, we have found, is a splendid and vital instinct with a singular power of inter-penetrating and reinforcing other energies. But it is an instinct that has for its attendant characteristics, among primitive peoples, pugnacity, in later civilization, intense egotism. Always and everywhere it tends to be exclusive and individualistic. This exclusiveness of sex seems permanently and inexorably imposed by ineluctable nature. Now, if the object of life were the reproduction, the handing on

of life, we should say, and rightly say, to woman : "Be womanly : be wife and mother." And we should say to man : "Be manly : be husband and father." So best would our purpose be served. But the problem before us is more difficult, more complex. We want to live life, and human life, for woman as for man, is lived to the full only in and through the "herd," is social. We want, in a word, for the sake of this fulness of life, to co-ordinate our individualistic instincts, of which sex seems to be the strongest and most exclusive, with our altruistic, herd instincts.

The old view, while we were yet untroubled by ethnology, sociology, and psychology, was that life is a sort of Sunday school, which we entered at birth to fit us for a future life. It had rules we were bound to obey, virtues and vices to be acquired and shunned, praise and, above all, blame, to be duly apportioned. Alas ! for the Sunday school and its virtues ; it has gone the way of the Garden of Eden. We may well nowadays sometimes sigh for their lost simplicity. The life we know now is more like a great maelstrom of forces out of which man, in tardy self-consciousness, just uprears his head. And the maelstrom is not only of mechanical forces, which he might compute and balance, and which by counterpoise negate each other, but of vital spiritual and mental forces, which *grow* by counterpoise and whose infinite intricacy baffles computation. Not the least difficult, and certainly among the most intricate and complex of the problems before us, is the due counterpoise of sex and humanity.

The problem is not likely to grow simpler. Sex shows no signs of a tendency to atrophy. In view of evolutionary laws, how should it ? It is by and through sex that the fittest survive. On the whole, it is those least highly dowered with sex who remain unmarried and die out. It is true, however, that, though the sex-impulse does not atrophy, it becomes milder and less purely instinctive by being blended

with other impulses. From a blind reproductive force it becomes a complex sentiment. Therein, in the diffusion and softening of the impulse lies the real hope, but therein lies the complexity of the problem. It is interesting, and may be, I think, instructive, to note a very early and widespread attempt at solution made, and still being made, by primitive man—an attempt in some respects curiously analogous* to the efforts to-day of beings more highly civilized.

Over the greater part of the world, from the South Pacific Islands, through Australia, Melanesia, Polynesia, Africa, and America, an institution has been observed common to nearly all savage tribes called the "Man's House." The savage, instead of living a simple domestic life with wife and child, lives a double life. He has a domestic home and a social home. In the domestic home are his wife and family; in the Man's House is passed all his social, civilized life. To the Man's House he goes when he attains maturity. It is his public school, his university, his club, his public-house. Even after marriage, it is in the Man's House he mainly lives. For a woman to enter the Man's House is usually *taboo*; the penalty is often death. Oddest of all to our minds, the Man's House is not only his social home but also his church. A woman among savages must not go to the Man's Church. To join in the mysteries of the Man's Church, or even sometimes to behold them from a distance, is to a woman death. At the sound of the church-bell, the sacred Bull-roarer, woman must

* I should like to state distinctly that the ethnological observations introduced from time to time are to be regarded not as arguments supporting my thesis but merely as illustrations. The desirability of the emancipation of women is no wise bound up with their acceptance, and should they be discredited to-morrow or otherwise interpreted, it would remain untouched. The study of primitive custom has, however, helped me to my present point of view, and may, I hope, help others.

flee, or fall flat with her face to the ground. The home is to us the place of hospitality for strangers. Not so for primitive man. The entertainment of strangers, all contact with and news from the outside world, is reserved for the Man's House. There, too, he discusses the affairs of the tribe, there holds his parliament, in a word, a Man's House is "the House" and has all its "inviolable sanctity." From religion, from politics, from social life, from contact with the outside world, woman is rigidly secluded. She is segregated within her sex. She is invited to be "womanly."

From these undoubted and world-wide facts the learned German,* who has contributed so much to our knowledge of them, draws a conclusion singularly Germane. The province of woman, he urges, always has been, *always must be*, that of natural ties, of sex and of the blood relationships that spring from sex. Her emotional sphere is that of the family. Man, on the other hand, is by nature apt for society. He is naturally drawn to artificial associations made not under the compulsion of sex, but by free choice, through sympathy, equality of age, similarity of temperament. Woman is the eternal guardian and champion of the union of the sexes. She sets her face always against comradeship, against the free association of equals, which leads to advanced social complexes, to clubs, brotherhoods, artificial societies of every sort. In fact, broadly speaking, woman is of the individualistic instincts; man is of the herd sentiments. Ethnologically speaking, woman is of the family; man of the Man's House.

This *mutatis mutandis* is the position occupied by many at the present day. But, be it observed, this position must not be based on arguments drawn from

* Heinrich Schurtz, *Altersklassen und Männerbünde*, 1902, and for English readers see Hutton Webster, *Primitive Secret Societies*, 1908.

primitive sociology. Our learned German, had he read to the end of his own book, must have seen the refutation of his own theory. *The Institution of the Man's House almost invariably breaks down.* The doors, once so rigidly closed to all but the initiated man, open inch by inch. Gradually the Man's House alters in character, becomes more religious, the centre of a Secret Society to which woman begs or buys admission; it ends as a mere sanctuary or temple, or as a club-house whose taboos are less and less stringent, and whose last survivals are still precariously entrenched in the precincts of Pall Mall.

The institution of the Man's House was unquestionably an advance in civilization; but what is good for a time is not therefore good for *all* time. The full reasons for its breakdown are too complex for discussion here, but one cause of inadequacy is clear. Good and useful though the Man's House was for man, it left out half of humanity, woman. It civilized man by releasing him from sex, or, rather, by balancing his sex instincts which gather round his home with his "herd" instincts, his comradeship which centred round the Man's House. But the solution was crude, and by segregation. Release was sought, as too often to-day, not by a wise asceticism, but by the banishment of temptation, by the seclusion of women within their sex. It is as noticeable to-day as then that the less self-restraint a man is prepared to exercise, the more rigorously will he insist that woman shall be secluded. It is only the man who has his passions well to heel who is prepared to grant liberty to woman. Man had, and, in part, still *has* yet to learn that one half of humanity cannot be fully humanized without the other.

We are now at the second chapter in the history of the relation of the sexes. Woman, as well as man, is asking to be civilized, woman, who bore man, and who will bear his children. In woman, too, is this tremendous sex-impulse, that may devastate,

and that should fertilize. Is woman to live life to the full, or is her function only to hand on life? If she is to live it to the full, there is for her as for him only one solution. Sex must be not ignored or atrophied, still less must it, by a sort of mental jugglery, be at one and the same moment ignored and over-emphasized. Woman cannot be moralized through sex, because sex is a non-moral, that is a non-social instinct. But, for woman as for man, *non-moral* sex, the greatest of life forces, can be balanced, blended with other and humane sentiments. Man, because he is physically stronger, has got a little ahead in civilization. Woman, not because he is stronger, but merely *qua* sex impulse, is eternally subject to him. It is for him, surely, to hand on to her the gospel that has been his salvation, to teach her the words: "Homo sum, humani nihil a me alienum puto."

If sex, then, is egotistic, exclusive, if it needs balance by a broader humanity, what are the chief non-egotistic humanizing tendencies? What master passions can we oppose to the individualism, the exclusiveness, the pugnacity, the egotism of sex? The answer is clear. We have two great forces at our disposal, the desire for knowledge, or, as psychologists call it, the "instinct of curiosity," and pure altruism, the desire to use our strength and our knowledge for the welfare of the herd, and specially its weaker members. Now, it is the emergence of these two desires which have marked the two stages of the Woman's Movement—I mean the demand for higher education, the demand for political freedom.

At this point I must make a somewhat shameful confession. For long, very long, I was half-hearted as to the Woman's Movement. I desired higher education, freedom to know, but not, as I explained before, the vote, not freedom to act and control. The

reason was mainly pure selfishness, and—for this is always at the back of selfishness—a sluggish imagination. I myself intensely desired freedom to learn; I felt it to be the birthright of every human being. The thing was self-evident to me, I did not care to argue about it; it was a faith held with a passionate intensity beyond any reasoned conviction. Man had always most generously held out to me the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge; I not unnaturally placed him on a pedestal, and did homage to him as my Sacred Serpent.

But as to the vote, politics seemed to me, personally, heavy and sometimes rather dirty work, and I had always, on principle, preferred that a man-servant should bring in the coals. I am not ashamed of my lack of interest in politics. That deficiency still remains and must lie where it has always lain, on the knees of the gods. But that I failed to sympathize with a need I did not feel, of that I am truly ashamed. From that inertia and stupidity I was roused by the Militant Suffragists. I read of delicate and fastidious women who faced the intimate disgusts of prison life because they and their sister-women wanted a vote. Something caught me in the throat. I felt *that they were feeling*, and then, because I felt, I began to understand.

To feel keenly is often, if not always, an amazing intellectual revelation. You have been wandering in that disused rabbit-warren of other people's opinions and prejudices which you call your mind, and suddenly you are out in the light. If this letter should meet the eye of any Militant Suffragist (pugnacity, may I say, is *not* my favourite virtue, though my sympathies are always apt to go more with the church militant than the church triumphant), I should like, though I do not fight in her camp, to thank her from my heart for doing me a signal service, for making me feel, and thereby teaching me to understand.

An eminent novelist has recently told us that women

are to have higher education, but not political power, not the Parliamentary vote. Women are "unfit to govern." An eminent statesman has only yesterday told us that women may have university training, they may even look for that priceless boon, that crown of intellectual effort, the degree of Bachelor of Arts; they may have knowledge, and the label that guarantees them as knowing, but membership of the university, power to govern, power to shape the teachings by which they have profited, No.

Have Mrs. Humphrey Ward and Lord Curzon, in their busy and beneficent lives, found time to read M. Henri Bergson's "L'Evolution Créatrice"? Long ago Socrates told us that we only know in order that we may act. M. Bergson has shown us *how* this is, and *why*. Intellect, as contrasted with instinct, is the tool-maker, is essentially practical, always ultimately intent on action. To a few of us—and we are happy, if sometimes lonely—knowledge, which began with practical intent, becomes an end in itself, an object for rapturous contemplation. But to most human beings, and these are the best of our citizens, knowledge is the outcome of desire, and is always forging on towards action, action which necessarily takes shape as increased dominion over the world of nature and humanity. You can, it is true, shovel ready-made information into the human mind, without seriously affecting life and character. But the awakening of the *desire to know* is primarily nothing but the awakening of the *intention to act*, to act more efficiently and to shape the world more completely to our will.

Mrs. Humphrey Ward and Lord Curzon are half-a-century too late. They may entrench themselves on their castle of sand, but the tide has turned, and the sea is upon them. When women first felt the insistent need to know, behind it, from the beginning, unconscious though they were, was for most of them the more imperative impulse to act.

Women *qua* women remain, for the better continuance of life, subject to men. Women as human beings demand to live as well as to continue life. To live effectively they must learn to know the world through and through, in order that, side by side with men, they may fashion life to their common good.

I am, dear Anti-Suffragist,

Sincerely yours,

AN ANTHROPOLOGIST.

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